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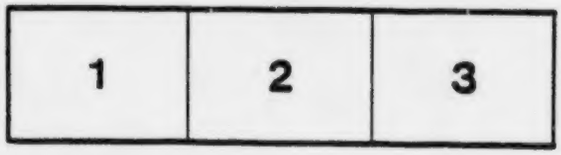

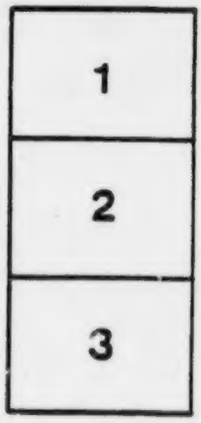

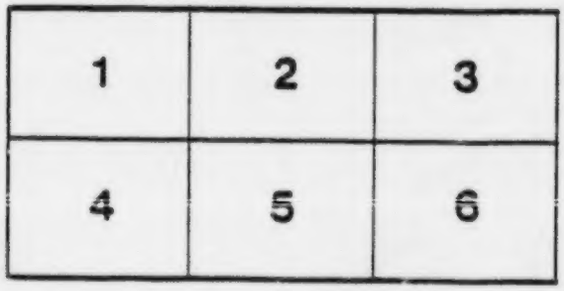

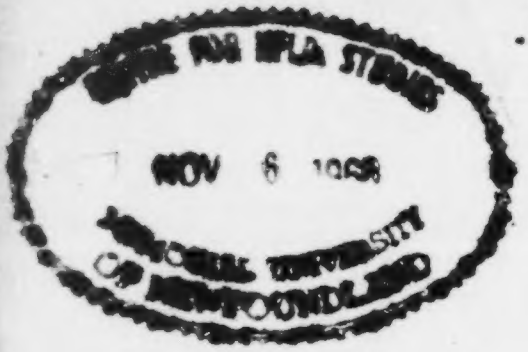
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Hutton, James.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND;

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IN WHICH

SOME ACCOUNT IS GIVEN

OF THE

BRETHREN'S SOCIETY

FOR THE

FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

AMONG

THE HEATHEN.

copy
James Hutton

LONDON:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR

MDCCLXIX.

BRITISH PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES
MORAVIAN CHURCH

A LETTER TO A FRIEND, &c.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

SOME of the Brethren had a meeting to-day, when we revived our Society for the "Furtherance of the Goſpel among the Heathen in the Britiſh dominions," and ſettled it on a more enlarged plan; but as you may be glad to know ſomething of the original deſign of this Society, I will endeavour to give you as exact an account as I am able; of the occaſion which gave riſe to the deſign of beginning ſuch a Society almoſt twenty-ſeven years ago, and what our Society then was.

THE Society is even now but ſmall, and was begun by a few perſons of the middle rank, or rather ſomething above the lower ſort of people, but they were filled with a zeal, perhaps ſeldom to be found but among perſons of that rank; they were a good natured willing people, quite in earneſt in the matter, and I can aſſure you, it was one of the greateſt pleaſures of my life, to ſee thoſe few ſo hearty and alive in the thing.

THE Brethren's Church having had invitations to preach the goſpel to the Heathen in ſome parts of the Britiſh America, ſome members of that church came

to London in their way thither, and being unacquainted with the language, had, at their firſt ſetting out, many and troubleſome difficulties, and were liable to uncommonly diſagreeable circumſtances, for want of being properly underſtood and known, and for want of ſome friendly care and recommendation to the captains of the ſhips they went with, and to ſome friends in the countries they went to; neither were they abounding in this world's goods, but had a truly antient apoſtolical truſt in God, that he would know how to bring them to the places they were going to; and as they had little experience in the price of freight, and the charges of long voyages, they were not always ſufficiently provided, a priori, with the money neceſſary to ſuch purpoſes.

Some perſons in London, with whom they had providentially become acquainted, took their circumſtances into conſideration, and wiſhed to know how to act in the beſt manner to aſſiſt thoſe whom they ſaw were venturing their lives and health in order to bring the Heathen to the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, for the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls.

I muſt tell you, my dear friend, that the very ſight of theſe truly apoſtolical men, and their zeal for the converſion of the Heathen, not in a preſumptuous or vain ſpirit, or phariſaical affectation, but full of a humane, chearful, humble behaviour, was ſo edifying to us, that it made us, who were intimate with them and witneſſes to their conduct here, wiſh moſt zealouſly to take that ſhare in their undertaking, which

we

we thought might be poſſible for us here to execute, and properly to FURTHER them on their way, and thence we took the name of the "Society for the Furtherance of the Goſpel." I remember the ideas we then had, and the ſpirit of our firſt meetings.

WE believed, that our Saviour had died for the whole world, and would have all men to be ſaved by the knowledge of the truth, which he had ordered to be preached to all nations: We ſaw theſe men willing to carry the goſpel to the Heathen in perſon at all hazards, and we ſaw that they did it out of love for Jeſus Chriſt, and a deſire to fulfil his will, and a tender concern for the ſalvation of the Heathen, and that they had embraced the providential call they had to this bleſſed buſineſs.

WE recollected that there was one Lord, one Saviour for us and them, and that, though we for our perſons thought we had not or perhaps never might have the ſame call with them, to go and preach to the Heathen in perſon, yet being redeemed by the ſame precious blood of Chriſt, and having believed the goſpel, as well as theſe willing miſſionaries, we had in general the very ſame inducement, which they had, to be helpful in our reſpective ſtations and callings to the furthering of that work, which we ſuppoſed very reaſonably would be agreeable to the univerſal Lover, Saviour and Friend of mankind, who had laid down his life for his enemies, who only need be known to be beloved and obeyed, and in whoſe name alone there is compleat ſalvation.

And although the being a member of this Society does not imply a call to go in perſon among the Heathen, but only ſhews our free, willing and diſintereſted deſire to ſerve the miſſions; yet we muſt own, that at times we have felt in our meetings ſuch a ſtrong impulſe to take perſonal ſhare in their miſſions, that we all fain would have gone ourſelves on that important errand. Indeed ſome of us have been bleſt with ſuch a call now and then; but the remainder have had the comfort to be faithful partakers and promoters of this great work of God, by catching at every opportunity to ſerve it at home by giving all the aſſiſtance in our power.

We were at firſt but a few, and theſe met together to conſider, how we might contrive to make the little help, each of us could give, become any thing worth naming by being added together, and to make that little go as far as it could. To this purpoſe we reſolved to form ourſelves into a Society, towards the deſigns of which each member might contribute ſtatedly or occaſionally, his little mite, each according to his ability, without teazing or preſſing one another to enlarge the contribution, as we believed, that our generous Saviour had no pleaſure in conſtrained gifts, and that he likes only ſuch as are given out of a free, willing heart, ſo we made that a principal point with us; and I can truly ſay, we wanted then more to reſtrain our members, as to the largeneſs of the ſum, than to urge them to an increaſe of their contribution. Such was the ſpirit of thoſe days.

We employed ourſelves therefore as a Society in receiving and entertaining ſuch miſſionaries who paſſed through London in their way to America, providing them proper lodgings, taking care to ſupply what might be wanting for their freight and proviſions, and ſome neceſſary refreſhments in their voyage, recommending them to the captains, making the bargain for their paſſage, taking care of their letters, doing their little commiſſions, and indeed every kind of thing, wherein we could further them, or be of pleaſure or ſervice to them; and, can you think, that was not a pleaſure to ourſelves? My dear Friend, it was a great one, and it was a very great advantage to us to ſee ſo many apoſtolical people, whom the delays of their voyages kept here occaſionally, a conſiderable time amongſt us, eſpecially in war time by embargo's, waiting for convoys, &c. They were much to our edification, ſtrengthening and confirming our faith in Jeſus Chriſt, not only by their words, but by their good example.

So we went on for ſeveral years; but at laſt the Brethren's Church, by the miſſions increaſing, was obliged to appoint general deputies of all their churches, who had the care for providing for their Heathen miſſions in all parts of the world, who receive the contributions of all their churches to this work. But we have now deſired, that our Society here be revived, particularly for that branch of the Heathen miſſion in the Britiſh dominions, that we may again take our little ſhare in our ſeveral branches of aſſiſtance,

which

which the general Heathen deputies had for ſeveral years entirely taken upon themſelves, and we are much obliged to them and to all our churches for the plentiful contributions they have given theſe many years to the Heathen miſſions in the Britiſh dominions, and doubt not of their kind continuance, of which we have the cleareſt hopes.

As many of the old members therefore as were ſtill in London, met together to-day, to renew and revive our Society, and we had the pleaſure to have ſeveral of the ancient Brethren of the Brethren's Church with us, with whom we firſt became acquainted in their paſſage through London in their way to the Heathen, and who were at the firſt forming of the Society, almoſt twenty-ſeven years ago.

At this meeting we tried to give our Society a conſiſtence; we reviſed our rules, choſe new members of the Society by ballot *, appointed by a majority of votes, ſix perſons to be the committee for current affairs of the Society, one of whom Mr. William Jackſon, was choſen treaſurer of the Society; and Mr. Wollin ſecretary, who correſponds alſo with the general deputies of all the Brethren's Churches for the Heathen miſſion, and two brethren, who are called ſervants of the Society, whoſe buſineſs is chiefly to execute the reſolutions of the committee and Society, in the ſeveral branches of activity neceſſary in buying in

* One rejecting ballot is ſufficient to hinder any perſon being choſe a member.

in ſhip-proviſions and refreſhments, in ſpeaking with the captains the miſſionaries go with, making the bargain for their paſſage, conducting them in proper time on board, doing their buſineſs at the Cuſtom-Houſe, &c. and every one of the Society and committee are engaged to be aſſiſtant to theſe two ſervants, occaſionally, in executing the reſolutions of the committee and Society.

THE committee meet as often as there is occaſion, generally once a week, the whole Society at leaſt once a month.

THE proper conſtituent members of the Society are all of them actual members of the united Brethren's Church, and every ordained miniſter of the Brethren's Church, who happens to be preſent in London, has a right by our rules to a ſeat and vote in the committee, and we have reaſon to expect many good ſervices from their preſence and encouragement.

BUT by our rules we can admit honorary members and correſpondent members, not of our church, who, when in London, can be occaſionally preſent, not only at the public general meeting, when the accounts of the progreſs of the goſpel among the Heathen are read, but alſo at the meeting of the members of the Society. To theſe honorary or correſpondent members will be communicated, occaſionally, the freſheſt accounts we receive of the work of the Lord among the Heathen, which is the chief joy of the Society, and for the ſake of which we are a Society, and we find

every

every where that the narration of the free-willing ſufferings of Chriſt for the ſins of the world, is received by the Heathen with attention, and when indeed believed by them, changes their hearts and whole life, and ſhews plainly that true faith cannot but produce good works and a proper behaviour, and that theſe Heathen believers become happy in themſelves and very exemplary chriſtians. Of this we have ſeveral thouſand inſtances among the divers nations of the Indians in North and South-America, the Greenlanders, and the Negroes in the Weſt-India-Iſlands, and they not only became happy and good chriſtians for themſelves, but conſequently good neighbours, good ſubjects, and uſeful to Society in general, and the Negroes in particular very faithful to their maſters.

No perſon of the Society is required, be he actual member, honorary member, or correſpondent member, to contribute. Some are not able to contribute much, others can contribute more, and when the members of the Society meet at their monthly or occaſional meetings, each perſon may put in a box, placed in the room for that purpoſe, whatever he ſhall be diſpoſed to give, quite unobſerved. If there ſhall happen to be a call for any extraordinary expence, the affair will be mentioned, and no one will be hindered from giving openly according to the exigence of the caſe, but no one is to be conſtrained to give at all.

At the ſeveral meetings of the Society, any matter which occurs will be related, or any thing which requires

quires deliberation will be conſulted about, an account will be given of what has been received and laid out, what may be wanted to be done, what miſſions are going forward, what the ſucceſs is, or promiſes to be here or there, the committee report what has paſſed in their meetings, &c.

EVERY year the whole committee can be continued, or changed at the pleaſure of the Society.

AND at the meetings of the Society any of our rules or proceedings can be corrected or altered, if needful, for we know that all human things may be altered for the better.

AT the above-mentioned public meeting, the accounts of the progreſs of the goſpel are read openly at Fetter-Lane Chapel monthly; at which alſo ſtrangers, who behave orderly, are admitted.

THOUGH we have hitherto publiſhed to the world but very little of the detail of our ſucceſs in the Heathen miſſions, except, very lately, the Greenland hiſtory, [which is indeed well worth the attention of all chriſtians of very denomination, and which we were forced to publiſh by the reproaches of ſome pious ſervants of God, not of our church, who blamed us for concealing ſo long the marvellous effects of the grace of God upon thoſe barbarians. To him be glory and honour for ever. Amen.]

I ſay, though we have hitherto publiſhed ſo little to the world in general of the detail of our miſſions, yet we cannot with-hold from our own people the comfortable

comfortable accounts we receive from thence, and, as we hope, that the prayers of all good and ſerious people, who may come freely to that monthly public meeting (and we ſuppoſe ſcarce any elſe will find any pleaſure in being there) will be of ſervice to our undertaking, we therefore read theſe accounts with open doors.

We have frequently wanted more money than we had any viſible proſpect of receiving, yet God ſtirred up the hearts of the Society and its friends and well-wiſhers, ſo that we were able to do many things more than our means ſeemed to promiſe, and his bleſſing and gracious countenance was upon us.

May he be pleaſed to bleſs the renewal of this Society, to take pleaſure in us, to give and keep up in us a lively and genuine free ſpirit, and even ſuch poor beings as we are, ſhall be uſeful in our little degree to his kingdom and ſervice.

I forgot to tell you, that our Society meets at No. 10. Nevil's-Court, Fetter-Lane, Fleet-Street.

I am,

My very dear Friend,

Lindsey-House,
Sept. 3, 1768.

Ever Yours, &c.

J. H.

BRITISH PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES — MORAVIAN CHURCH

FINIS.